

of our mere compilers, we often meet with speculations

beyond the reach of Thucydides or Tacitus/ ¹

On the other hand, modern historians had certain characteristic faults. Even the best of them were led astray by their desire to prove a theory or defend a system. They far excel their predecessors in the art of deducing general principles from facts. But unhappily they have fallen into the error of distorting facts to suit general principles/

' This species of misrepresentation abounds in the most valuable works of modern historians '—in Hume's History of England or Gibbon's Decline and Fall or Mitford's History of Greece, for example.

Hume is an accomplished advocate : without positively asserting much more than he can prove, he gives prominence to all the circumstances which support his case ; he glides lightly over those which are unfavourable to it; his own witnesses are applauded and encouraged ; the statements which seem to throw discredit on them are controverted ; the contradictions into which they fall are explained away ; a clear and connected abstract of their evidence is given. Everything that is offered on the other side is scrutinised with the utmost severity ;—every suspicious circumstance is a ground for comment and invective ; what cannot be denied is extenuated, or passed by without notice ; concessions even are sometimes made—but this insidious candour only increases the effect of the

vast mass of sophistry.²

Minor writers, such as Southey, Lingard,
and Mitford,
were advocates too.

In the midst of these disputes, however,
history proper,
if we may use the term, is disappearing. The
high, grave,
impartial summing up of Thucydides is
nowhere to be
found.

¹ Ibid. pp. 353, 358-9. ² Ibid. pp. 359-60.